

Merchant of venice

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



In this assessment I will analyse Shakespeare's use of language, structure and dramatic techniques to present the relationship between Shylock and the Christians at different points of the play. I will first look at Act 1 Scene 3, where we learn that Shylock has suffered mercilessly at the hands of the Christians and now harbors an almost sadistic hatred towards them. This can be evidence by Shylock's statement to Antonio. " You.....gabardine, ". This statement allows the audience to gain an understanding of Shylock's feelings and hatred towards Antonio. However, what is fascinating about this quote is Shakespeare's use of the words " you" and " dog". This is because, although Shylock and Antonio have never met before, Shylock's use of the word " you" suggests otherwise. The reason behind Shakespeare's use of personal and direct language is to allow the audience to imagine Antonio as the embodiment of Christianity. Thus, letting the Elizabethan audience know that Shylock's feelings of hatred is actually aimed towards the Christians and hence the Elizabethan audience themselves, therefore causing further resent and prejudice towards Shylock's character. While the use of the word " dog", which is repeated throughout the play, not only symbolises that the Christians see Shylock as beneath them and will never be their equal. But also reinforces, through the use of repetition, that Shylock is seen as an infestation to the Elizabethan society, which in turn adds to Shylock's humiliation and determination for revenge. However, due to his social ranking Shylock must consciously recognise his position of inferiority and must also treat the Christians with a, one sided, respect, despite his affluent position. Shakespeare manages to show this involuntary respect from Shylock to Antonio by structuring the dialog between these two main

characters in poetry. Furthermore the level of hatred that Shylocks possesses towards the Christians can be evidence from Shylocks aside speech to the audience. " If.....bear him. " The " ancient grudge" in this case being that Antonio is a Christian. This aside statement not only strengthens the idea that the mutual disdain between Shylock and the Christian is religious in nature, but also Shylock's obsessive need for revenge, a revenge he hopes to achieve through Antonio's bond. Because of this aside speech, most modern day audiences would be able to sympathise with Shylocks need for retribution. However, for an Elizabethan audience, Shylock's aside speech will have no sympathetic effect. Instead it was a dramatic techniques used by Shakespeare to add further prejudice towards Shylock's character and to add comedic value to the play. In Act 3 Scene 1, we see the seriousness of Shylock's sadistic nature when he discovers that Antonio cannot fulfil his bond. Arguing that his obsession for revenge is just and he is entitled to revenge, in the same way that any Christian would. " hath.....? ", " If..... revenge! " This iconic speech uses a number of persuasive techniques to justify Shylocks feelings and need for retribution. First notice Shakespeare's use of rhetorical questions in quick succession. This technique causes the audience to think, agree and actually sympathise with Shylock argument to some extent. This agreement is then reinforced, through the use of imagery, allowing the audience to gain a better understanding of Shylock's feeling and emotions. Thus cause the audience to realise some of the prejudice that is currently present towards the Jewish community. In conclusion Shakespeare has used a variety of techniques and forms of languages to effectively highlight the prejudice towards the Jewish

community during the Elizabethan period. In the two act that I mentioned it is clear that Shylocks feels he deserve justice through personal revenge and that he is not respected in the society, due to the Christians arrogant and prejudice vies towards his people. Although most of use might not morally agree with Shylock's approach in seeking retribution, there is no denying that the language used by Shakespeare is a strong reminder of what persecution can have on an individual.